

Las Vegas Sands plans to bid for UK supercasino

London (Reuters) – U.S. casino group Las Vegas Sands Corp. plans to bid to run Britain's first Las Vegas-style supercasino in Manchester, a spokesman said on Tuesday.

The UK government's Casino Advisory Panel last week named the northern city as its surprise choice to host the 5,000 square metres venue, ahead of challengers including nearby Blackpool, Glasgow in Scotland and London's Millennium Dome.

Sixteen other towns and cities were named for smaller casinos.

„For Sands there is now only one choice, and that's Manchester,“ said the spokesman. „Sands is a builder of resorts where the casino is only part of the revenue model.“

Sands, which is also expanding on several fronts in Asia, operates the Venetian resort and the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas. It also runs a casino in Macau, China.

Total gambling revenue in the former Portuguese enclave has since surpassed that of the Las Vegas Strip, reaching USD 7 billion last year.

Before Britain chose Manchester as its preferred supercasino site, Sands had previously shown interest in ventures in Glasgow, Blackpool and Sheffield, which were all seen as strong contenders.

Manchester's victory was so unexpected that even its own councillors had to rush to a local supermarket to buy champagne, industry sources said.

Companies will learn in the next two months how they should submit their bids to run the new generation casinos. Analysts say that regardless of the location, whoever wins the contract

to run the supercasino will profit from a monopoly position for the next 10 years.

A source close to Sands said, „We now need to draw breath and assess how we'll go about bidding.“

Bookmaker Paddy Power names Kerzner International as its favourite to run the Manchester venue, followed by Ladbrokes and then U.S.-based Harrah's Entertainment.